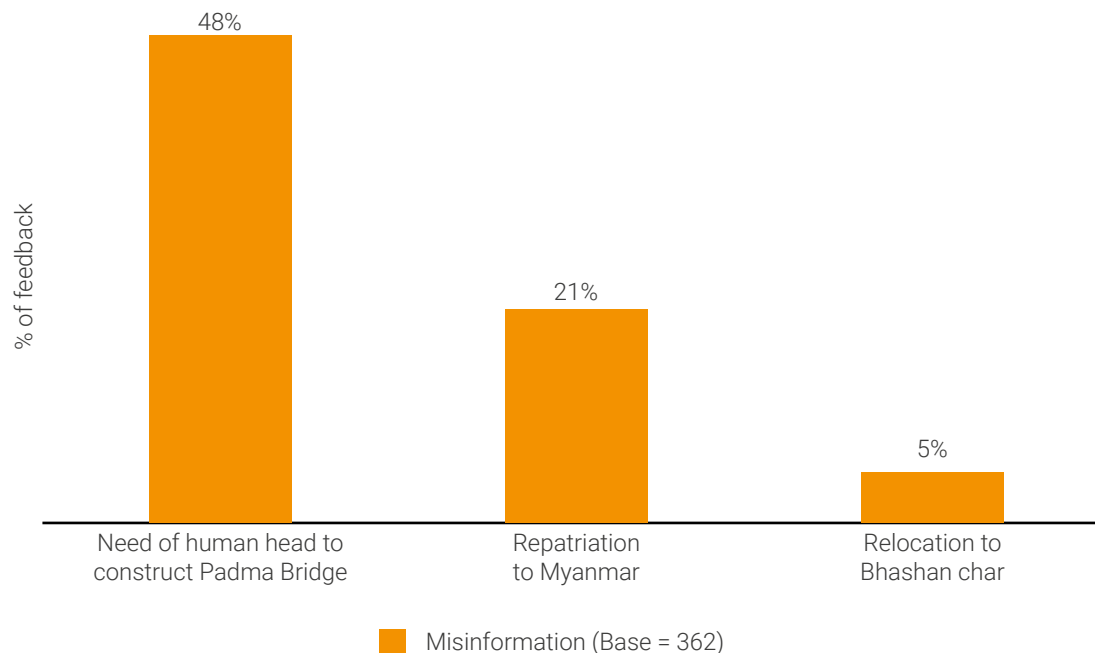


Spread of misinformation in the Rohingya camps

Source: 362 Listening groups in camps 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23 and 24 from June to August 2019. Community feedback data collected by Action Aid Bangladesh, BRAC, Care, Center for Social Integrity, Christian Aid, Danish Refugee Council, International Organization for Migration, Medical Teams International, Premiere Urgence Internationale and Technical Assistance Inc. Focus group discussions conducted by BBC Media Action in September 2019 in camp 2 with both male and female participants (age 18-25 and 26+).

% people raising concerns about different topics where concerns are based at least partially on misinformation



WHAT MATTERS?

Humanitarian Feedback Bulletin on Rohingya Response

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Between June and August 2019, Rohingya people raised concerns about many different issues. Amongst these, and having discussed concerns with humanitarian practitioners and reviewed secondary literature, some of the community's worries have been found to be based on misinformation.

The topics where the most prevalent misinformation seems to be circulating are the use of human heads to construct the Padma Bridge, repatriation to Myanmar and relocation to *Bhashan char*. People have heard other types of misinformation as well, including that vaccinations can cause people to change their religion. This edition of *What Matters?* will explore these topics in more detail.

Padma Bridge

Rohingya people in listening groups said that they had heard that human heads were needed to construct the Padma Bridge. Some even mentioned a specific number (one thousand). They had heard that people are being killed and children have been kidnapped for this reason. They said that they were afraid of losing their children because they had heard that some women from the host community had come to the camps to take children away. For that reason, they said that they were not allowing their children to go to school.



We forbid our children to go too far from the house... we also asked our men not to stay outside at night."

– Woman, 40

Repatriation

Misinformation related to repatriation includes details about when repatriation will take place, what the process will be and the conditions that will be available for Rohingya people after being repatriated to Myanmar.

- Time: Some listening group participants heard that they will be repatriated in few months, while others said they will be repatriated in 2020, and others in two years.
- Process: People are talking about the repatriation process. Some heard that they will be repatriated forcibly and that, if they don't want to go, then the support they receive in Bangladesh will be stopped. Some FGD participants said they had heard that people who had been registered in the camps the longest would be sent back first. Others heard that those who arrived most recently would be sent back first.

“ We heard that if we don't go to Myanmar, all the support will be stopped...a teacher from the host community told us this.”
– Man, 35

- Conditions after repatriation: People heard that if they are going to be repatriated, their demands will not be fulfilled and their basic rights will not be ensured. They have heard they will be kept in camps like the camps in Bangladesh. One of the participants said that they had seen a picture of those camps on a family member's mobile phone. People have also heard that they will not be allowed to work in Myanmar, and even that they will be killed once they get there.

“ We don't want to go Myanmar because we will not be allowed to do anything there and they (the army) will kill us.”
– Woman, 26

Relocation

Listening group participants had heard that the Bangladesh government has built houses on an island far from Cox's Bazar, which takes around 3 hours to get to by boat from the mainland. They have heard there are no jobs, that the island is flooded most of the time and that it could be submerged at any time.

Other rumours around relocation include that the island is far from Myanmar and that people who go to the island will not be able to return to Myanmar. People have also heard that the island is dangerous to live on because of the presence of ghosts and ferocious animals.

Vaccination

Since arriving in the camps, Rohingya children, men and women have been vaccinated several times. According to FGD participants, children were vaccinated against cholera and tetanus. They also said that women and children were vaccinated after birth and that men and older people had also been vaccinated, although they weren't sure what these vaccines were designed to protect them against.

People said that, at first, they were scared to get vaccinated as they believed that, if they did, a picture of the cross would appear on their hands and they would become Christian.

“ A cross appears on the hands after the vaccine, and because of this tattoo, people become Christian.”
– Woman, 26

Some people said that they felt even more scared when they were given medicine to take. They couldn't mention the name of the medicine or why it was given

Most people said that they had no idea about who will be sent to the island and how they will get there. But some female participants said that they had heard that people who have been in Bangladesh for a long time and have the joint registration card will be the first to be moved to the island.

“ Those who came to the camp a long time ago and have their ID card (registered) will be sent to Bhashan Char.”
– Woman, 26

to them. They said that, when they mixed the medicine with water after being instructed by volunteers, they saw the outline of an animal in the water. They also believed that, if they take the medicine, they would become Christian. People said that volunteers had told them that no-one would become Christian because of medicine or vaccinations but, despite this, some male and female community members still believed that they would become Christian. Some of the male participants said that they had heard that, when people die, people came to look at the body and claimed it as Christian if there was a cross on the hand.

Some male participants said that their children had become weak after having a vaccination and had heard that some children had even died because of a vaccine.

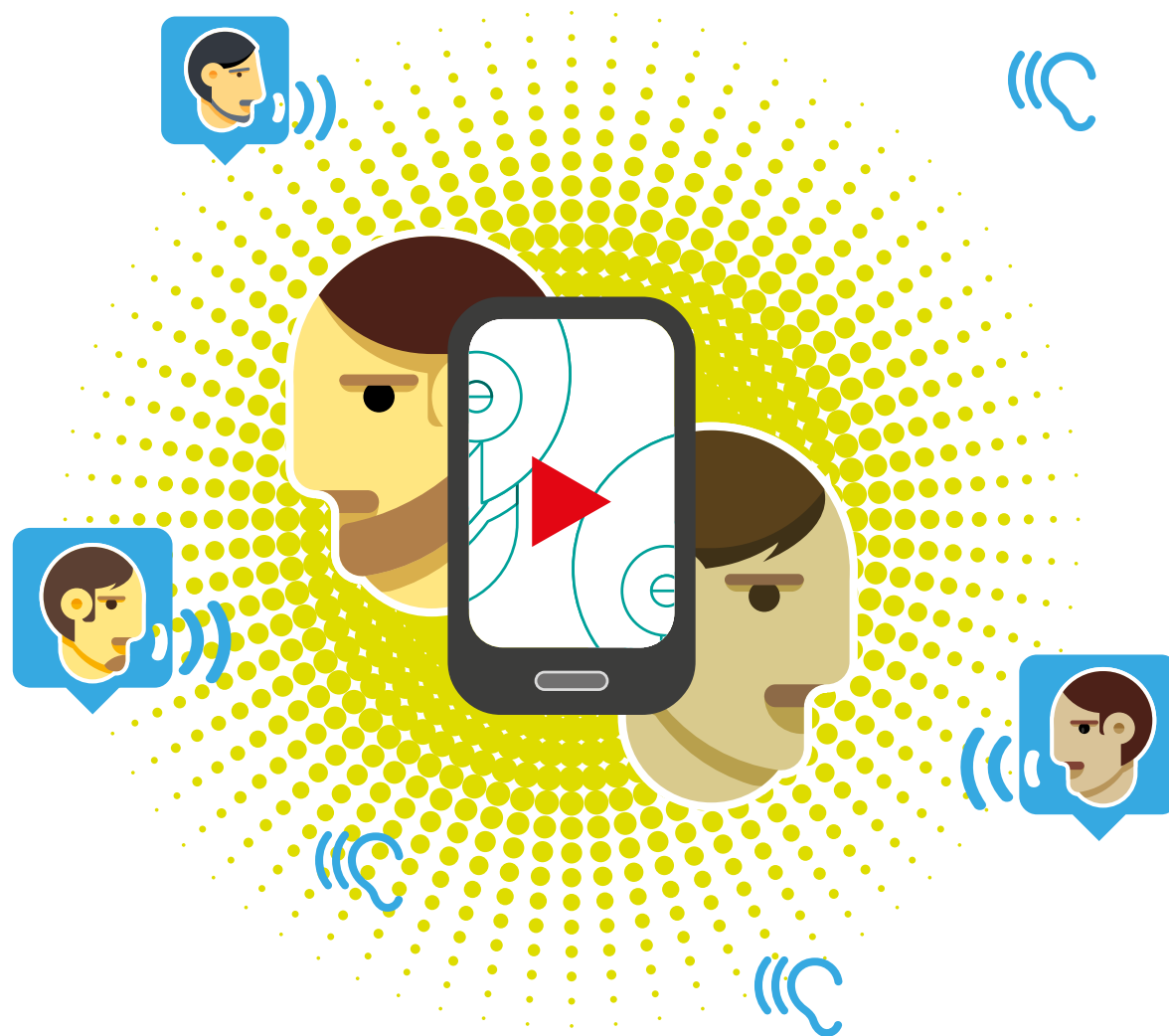
“ My boy became weak after getting a vaccine and I heard that one also died.”
– Man, 56

Misinformation spreading through different channels

From the FGD participants it was found that misinformation is spreading through Rohingya people living in camps, through those still living in Myanmar and via the host community. Misinformation is being spread via different channels, including through mobile phones and through video clips being shared on Facebook and YouTube.

Some Rohingya people said that they tend to check with NGO workers or volunteers when they hear any information. But others said that they didn't check with anyone, since they haven't experienced anything, and that if something happened to them they would inform the CIC.

Rohingya focus group participants suggested that, if NGOs provided sufficient proof of what they were telling refugees, people were more likely to believe them. They also suggested that if mahjis provided information to people, this would help.



BBC Media Action and Translators without Borders are working together to collect and collate feedback from communities affected by the Rohingya crisis. This summary aims to provide a snapshot of feedback received from Rohingya and host communities, to assist sectors to better plan and implement relief activities with communities' needs and preferences in mind.

The work is funded by EU humanitarian aid and the UK Department for International Development.

If you have any comments, questions or suggestions regarding *What Matters?*, you are welcome to get in touch with the team by emailing info@cxbfeedback.org